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PARALLELS IN COLERIDGE, KEATS, AND ROSSETTI.

Everyone in reading Coleridge, Keats, and Rossetti must have noticed certain similarities between Coleridge and the other two. The phrasal echoes, and the repeated musical cadences sometimes lie plainly on the surface. Yet, surprisingly enough, only the most casual attention seems to have been given them. Mr. Buxton-Forman, in his—supposedly—definitive edition of Keats,¹ records in the footnotes the fact that Keats's words *honey-dew* and *ladye* are also used by Coleridge; but no more. Brandl² speaks of the *Eve of St. Agnes* as closely related to *Christabel*, points out that the part of Geraldine is taken by a lover; and lets it go at that. Mr. Traill³ points out a general similarity between *Christabel*'s chamber and that in the *Eve of Saint Agnes*. Mr. MacCracken in a recent article, *The Source of Keats's "Eve of St. Agnes,"*⁴ does not mention Coleridge at all. Mr. Sidney Colvin in his excellent life of Keats, otherwise copious in parallels and sources, has only three vague references on the point. In connection with the songs in the fourth book of *Endymion*,⁵ he remarks upon "a power like that of Coleridge, and perhaps partly caught from him, of evoking the remotest weird and beautiful associations almost with a word." Again,⁶ he says that in the roundelay in *Endymion*, Keats equaled Coleridge in "touches of wild musical beauty and far-sought romance." Almost in the last sentence of the book, he adds as an afterthought⁷ "After or together with Coleridge, Keats has also contributed most, among English writers, to the poetic method and ideals of Rossetti and his group." Mr. Benson,⁸ in

dealing with Rossetti's indebtedness, is more definite. Coleridge and Keats, he thinks, are the poets to whom Rossetti was nearest. From Coleridge came the modes of conception and execution, romantic isolation, and the scene "beyond the faery casement, on the perilous seas forlorn, and in the enchanted woodland of the land of dreams." The specific parallels, however, number exactly one. The germ of the *Blessed Damozel*, Mr. Benson thinks, lies in the *Ancient Mariner*,⁹ and the first four lines of stanza ten he considers an echo. Albert Eichler,¹⁰ in his recent edition of the *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, cites Brandl, and notes a few general rhetorical similarities between *Christabel* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*. He also points out rather vaguely that the same material, through the medium of Coleridge's *Dark Ladye*, affected Keats's *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*. He cites, however, no specific instances.

If, before taking up the parallels themselves, we turn to the chronology of the matter, we shall find no little presumption in favor of a probable Coleridgean influence upon both Keats and Rossetti. In Keats the notable Coleridgean parallels occur in *Lamia* and the *Eve of St. Agnes*. The corresponding parallels in Coleridge are most numerous in the second part of *Christabel*. The second part of *Christabel* was published in 1816.¹¹ Coleridge was then one of the most respected and most discussed of men of letters. His addition to *Christabel* must therefore have created no slight stir. In 1818, scarcely two years later, Keats wrote *Lamia* and the *Eve of St. Agnes*. [They were published in 1820.]

In Rossetti the Coleridgean parallels occur in the *Blessed Damozel*, *The White Ship*, and *Rose Mary*. The *Blessed Damozel*, the first of these in point of date, was published in *The Germ* in 1850. It is safe therefore to assume that it was written

¹ New York: Crowell, 1900.

² *Life of Coleridge*, Ch. iv.

³ *Coleridge*. [Eng. Men of Letters Series], 1898.

⁴ *Mod. Phil.*, Oct., 1907.

⁵ P. 105.

⁶ P. 170.

⁷ P. 219.

⁸ *Rossetti*. [Eng. Men of Letters], 1904, p. 141.

⁹ Can he know of the parallels in Dante?

¹⁰ *Wiener Beit.*, xxvi, 1907, p. 44.

¹¹ The First Part had been previously circulated and read in manuscript.

circa 1849. Now between the years 1845 and 1848 Rossetti was enthusiastically reading Coleridge and Keats.¹² *Rose Mary* and *The White Ship* were not published until long after this, in 1881, *The White Ship* having been written in 1880 for the children of William Rossetti.¹³ During the lapse of thirty years it might be supposed that any youthful enthusiasm for Coleridge would have waned. But we have external evidence to the contrary. For William Michael Rossetti writes in 1870,¹⁴ "He [Dante Gabriel], however, inclines to set Byron above him [Shelley]. Hitherto he has also preferred Coleridge, Keats, and others." "Hitherto" could scarcely mean thirty years before. That this admiration of Coleridge was not only prolonged, but—at least at times—extravagant, is evidenced by Rossetti's own words,¹⁵ "I worship him on the right side of idolatry."

Turning now to the parallels between Coleridge and Keats,¹⁶ we find the most notable between *Christabel* and Keats's *Lamia*. The parallelism inheres in the very plot. It will be recalled that in *Christabel* the Lady Geraldine is a supernatural being, who is found in distress by Christabel, who exercises an unholy fascination over Christabel, and who is plainly serpentine. The bard Tracy¹⁷ describes her thus, allegorically, in his account of the dream, in which Christabel is a dove entwined by a serpent. A little farther on the serpentine quality comes out more strongly:¹⁸

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance!

Again, a little later,¹⁹ comes the memory of

¹² See *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family-letters, with a Memoir by William Michael Rossetti*. London: Ellis & Elvey, 1895. Vol. I, p. 100.

¹³ Benson, p. 108.

¹⁴ *Rossetti Papers* [1862-1870]. Compiled by William Michael Rossetti. London: Sands & Co., 1903, p. 498. Cf. also Rossetti's sonnet on Coleridge, pub. 1881.

¹⁵ Benson, p. 172.

¹⁶ In pointing these out I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. E. R. Schlueter, who has pointed out several that had escaped my attention.

¹⁷ Part II, ll. 526-559.

¹⁸ Part II, ll. 583-587.

¹⁹ L. 602.

"those shrunken serpent eyes." The plot of the remaining unwritten part of the poem is told in Gillman's life of Coleridge, presumably on the authority of Coleridge. As it affords an additional parallel to *Lamia*, it may be quoted in full.²⁰ The bard, at the end of the poem, is sent to tell Lord Roland that his—*soi disant*—daughter is safe. Then in the words of Gillman:

"Over the mountains the Bard, as directed by Sir Leoline, hastes with his disciple [the youth to bear his harp]; but, in consequence of one of those inundations supposed to be common to the country, the spot only where the castle once stood is discovered, the edifice itself being washed away. He determines to return. Geraldine, being acquainted with all that is passing, like the weird sisters in *Macbeth*, vanishes. Reappearing, however, she awaits the return of the Bard, exciting in the meantime by her wily arts all the anger she could rouse in the Baron's breast, as well as that jealousy of which he is described to have been [*sic*] susceptible. The old bard and the youth at length arrive, and therefore she can no longer personate the character of Geraldine, the daughter of Lord Roland de Vaux, but changes her appearance to that of the accepted though absent lover of Christabel. Next ensues a courtship most distressing to Christabel, who feels—she knows not why—great disgust for her once favored knight. This coldness is very painful to the Baron, who has no more conception than herself of the supernatural transformation. She at last yields to her father's entreaties, and consents to approach the altar with the hated suitor. The real lover returning, enters at this moment, and produces the ring which she had once given him in sign of her betrothment. Thus defeated, the supernatural being Geraldine disappears. As predicted, the castle-bell tolls, the mother's voice is heard, and, to the exceeding great joy of the parties, the rightful marriage takes place, after which follows a reconciliation and explanation between father and daughter."

In *Lamia* the serpent-woman reappears—this time as a *bona fide* serpent,—is found in the forest of Crete by Hermes, precisely as Geraldine is found by Christabel, and is rescued from great grief—this time from her enchantment. She entrances Lycius; much as Geraldine entrances Christabel; but is detected by the sage, fixed by his eye, and vanishes; precisely as the detected impostor Geraldine vanishes.

²⁰ Traill.—*Coleridge*, p. 58, note.

So much for the plot. In detail the parallels are as close. The brilliant coloring of the serpent Lamia may be quoted, to recall it (ll. 47-58):

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,
She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar.

It will be noted that "as she breathed" the colors "dissolved" and changed. In *Christabel* (line 499) the serpent of the bard's dream is "a bright green snake" encircling the dove;

And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swell'd hers.

The fact that this snake is "coil'd" about the dove and "couch'd" upon the grass and that Lamia when first discovered is "cirque-couchant" may also be not without significance.

Serpents of similarly gorgeous colors also occur in the *Ancient Mariner* (ll. 272-281). Compare especially the "wannish fire" of Lamia with the "elfish light" and the "golden fire" of these serpents:

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Again, in *Christabel* as in *Lamia* occurs the horror caused by a charm akin to that of the evil eye; only in one case it is caused by the eye of Geraldine, in the other by that of the seer. Yet again, as Geraldine appeals to Christabel as in distress and far from home, so Lamia appears to Hermes in distress and later appears to Lycius as a stranger, before asking him what he can do

To dull the nice remembrance of my home.

Between *Christabel* and the *Eve of St. Agnes* also there are parallels. The similarity of the chambers has been pointed out by Traill, but not the additional fact that in the two the undressing scenes are almost identical. Doubtless there is little possible variety in the act of removing a dress; but note the closeness of the details. Geraldine looses her cincture; her silken robe and inner vest drop to her feet; and "her bosom and half her side" are disclosed; and so she stands a moment in reflection. Madeline

Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in seaweed
Pensive awhile she dreams.

The fact that both poems introduce the owl, both a beadsman, both musical names of similar type, Geraldine, Leoline, Madeline, and both a watchdog—the last-mentioned in *Christabel* near the beginning, in the *Eve of St. Agnes* near the end,—this fact is possibly mere accident, but may be noted in passing. It is rather more significant that in each case the maiden's father is hostile to the family of the intruder, and that the action of each poem takes place in part at night, while the father is in ignorance of what is passing.

Turning now to Rossetti we find a very different sort of parallelism. That he was capable of exact phrasal borrowing has been shown in connection with his indebtedness to Dante. To Coleridge he owes little in this way. In fact there appears to be but one phrase that may be considered borrowed, and in that case the figure as well as the phrase is completely altered. *Ancient Mariner* (l. 222):

And every soul, it pass'd me by,
Like the whiz of my cross-bow.

Cf. *Blessed Damozel* (l. 41)²¹:

And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

But if this be the only semblance of a real echo, yet in *The White Ship* there are lines which inevitably set the *Ancient Mariner* ringing in the reader's memory. For example, these (stanzas 32 ff.):

²¹ Cf. also the last stanza of *Sister Helen*.

But at midnight's stroke they cleared the bay,
 And the White Ship furrowed the water-way.
 The sails were set, and the oars kept tune
 To the double flight of the ship and the moon :
 Swifter and swifter the White Ship sped
 Till she flew as the spirit flies from the dead :
 As white as a lily glimmered she
 Like a ship's fair ghost upon the sea.

In general lines also the *Ancient Mariner* and *The White Ship* are similar. Both are tales told with a mingling of the mystic and the real, the one told by the mariner, who occasionally interrupts the story to remind the reader of the narrator, the other told by "the butcher of Rouen, poor Berold," who similarly alludes here and there to himself, in order that the reader may not forget that it is all a monolog. In both we have a sort of artificialized ballad meter, and diction which simulates the simple and naïve diction of the true folk-ballad while avoiding its crudity. Again, in *The White Ship* (stanza 38) we have the "three hundred living that now must die." Cf. the "four times fifty" dead men in the *Ancient Mariner*. Again, we have in *The White Ship*, *mariners* riming with *spears* (stanza 20), and *were* with *fair* and *there* (stanza 25). Cf. *Ancient Mariner*, in which *mariner* rimes with *hear*, and *were* with *bare*.²²

In Rossetti's *Rose Mary* we find traces not only of the *Ancient Mariner*, but also of *Christabel*. In the first place we have the same simplicity of diction, and the same incongruous jumble of Christian sentiment with pagan supernaturalism and charms. More specifically, the *Ancient Mariner* and *Rose Mary* resemble one another strongly in the endings. For in each the charm is eventually broken, the chief character is blessed with forgiveness and rest—in the case of *Rose Mary* rest in another world, promised by a mysterious voice speaking over her body,—and simultaneously the scene of the spell is demolished with a supernatural and awful crash of the elements. With *Christabel* also, *Rose Mary* has a specific parallel. The use of highly romantic names, such as Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermain in *Christabel* and

James of Heronhay in *Rose Mary* may be a characteristic of all nineteenth century romanticism. But the chorus-like ending of part one of *Christabel*, just before the "conclusion," bears to the Beryl-songs of *Rose Mary* a similarity of irregular meter, a similarity of dramatic irony in highly musical form—like that of a Greek chorus—and sometimes a similarity of phrase, which can scarcely be accidental.

In addition to these similarities between Coleridge and Rossetti, there is another, which has been brought to light by the recently published *Jan Van Hunks* of Rossetti. This poem is somewhat inferior, and in places tempts one to believe it spurious. The parallelism may, however, be noted for what it is worth. Every stanza of *Jan Van Hunks* ends with a sort of afterthought or addition of two lines, which, after the stanza is really finished in the fourth line, rings through the fifth and sixth like an echo. This same effect occurs in a number of six line stanzas in the *Ancient Mariner*.²³

In view of all which one is tempted to call Coleridge not only one of the earliest nineteenth century romanticists, but also the earliest Pre-Raphaelite.

These seem to be about all the notable parallels. But, by way of corollary, it may be worth while to demolish a fallacy in closing. It has been sometimes stated²⁴ that Keats exerted an influence over Rossetti. And there is in the Rossettiana published by the poet's brother unusually strong presumption in favor of it.²⁵ In view of these facts, and in view of the difficulty of proving a general negative, one may hesitate to deny the statements. Yet the fact remains that I have been unable to find between Keats and Rossetti a single specific parallel, in rhythm, in subject-matter, or in sentiment. Moreover, there are marked dissimilarities just where one would expect the reverse. Whereas the scansion and the diction of Keats are about the richest of his century, the scansion of Rossetti—despite his refrains and irregular lines—is very simple, and his diction,

²² Cf. l. 20. L. 63. This pronunciation of *were* is alive

and may be heard in America, but with Rossetti it must have been merely an affectation,—as it doubtless was with Coleridge.

²⁴ Colvin, l. c. Benson, l. c.; also p. 99, where he calls Keats a Pre-Raphaelite.

²⁵ Cf. *Family-letters and Memoir*, Vol. I, pp. 100, 120, 141, 420; and *Rossetti Papers*, p. 498. Also Benson, p. 76.

despite the splendor of the suggested images, is in itself notably bare.²⁶ Again, Rossetti's narratives all take the ballad form; Keats's never do. Keats's meter is usually regular in larger features, richly varied in details; Rossetti's is daringly irregular in larger features, but in detail uses only simple variations. Again, Keats, even in his most supernatural scenes, is concrete, realistic; Rossetti, usually mystic and unreal, sometimes vague. Again, Keats—even admitting his sensuality—is notably free from any suggestion of sin; Rossetti's favorite topic is damnation.²⁷ Evidently then, when Mr. Benson calls Keats a Pre-Raphaelite, and tells us that from him Rossetti derived his richness of fancy, voluptuousness of mood, and "deliberate intention of wringing beauty out of the moment and the scene," we must write at the bottom "Not proved."

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"VITA NUOVA" AND "DOLCE STIL NUOVO."

In the *Modern Language Notes* for November last, F. J. A. Davidson proposes the adjective "mystic" as the proper translation for "nova" in the rubric Incipit Vita Nova of Dante's "libello," and suggests its application throughout the *Vita Nuova*. He also adds that, as far as he is aware, this interpretation has not been proposed before. In answer to this we may be permitted to indicate the following.

In the first place, although the Latin *novus* might have this meaning, Dante never uses it thus in his Latin works.¹ In the second place, it

²⁶ The only specific parallel pointed out between the poets is that of Mr. Benson, who notes the fact that both are addicted to compound words.

²⁷ Cf. *Rose Mary, Sister Helen, The Bride's Prelude*.

¹ For references for the use of *novus* in the Latin works, I am indebted to my friend, E. H. Wilkins of Harvard University, who gave me the following (taken from the Concordance to Dante's Latin works, now being prepared): *Epistolæ*, v, 3. 82. 134; vi, 51; vii, 20. 80; x, 320; *Eclogue*, ii, 17. 34; *Monarchia*, ii, 1. 8; 5. 119; iii, 3. 76; *Vulg. Eloq.*, i, 13. 50; ii, 13. 90. *Novissimum* in

is hard to admit at least one, if not two, of the Italian examples cited by Prof. D.² And in yet a third place, this same interpretation has not merely been proposed before: it has been combatted and, we think, refuted.

In 1900, Federzoni³ maintained that the title Incipit Vita Nova was given in Latin "per un doppio senso, del quale egli aveva bisogno, poichè incipit *vita nova* può esser inteso in due significazioni, 'Incomincia la vita nuovo' o 'Incomincia una vita nuova' e Dante volle dire che da un certo momento della sua vita (dal nono anno) incomincia quella narrazione che egli intitola Vita Nuova e che dallo stesso momento ha principio quello che è veramente detto dalle parole *vita nova*, cioè *vita singolare, confortata da specialissima grazia divina*" such as it appeared to Dante at the time he was compiling the *V. N.* And F. derives his theory not only from the general tendency of the *V. N.*, but also from *Purgatory xxx, 109-117*:

Non pur per opre delle rote magne

Ma per larghezza di grazie divine

Questi fu tal nella sua vita nuova

Virtualmente, ch'ogni abito destro

Fatto avrebbe in lui mirabil prova.

Barbi replied to this in *Bull. d. Soc. Dant.*, pointing out that if "sua vita nuova" be given the interpretation suggested by F., "s'introduce una brutta ripetizione nel contesto e si toglie senso al periodo."⁴ And Melodia, too, has opposed Federzoni, arguing along lines better fitted to answer Prof. D.'s suggestions.⁵ He gives the opinions of others and adds good arguments of his own. As those interested can find in his treatment the bibliography of this discussion, it is useless to repeat it here.

At the end of his communication, however,

Monarchia, iii, 14. 32 and 36; *Vulg. Eloq.*, i, 12. 36 and 14. 14.

² E. g., Chapter xxiv.

³ "Incipit Vita Nova": nota esegetica di Giovanni Federzoni, Bologna, 1900.

⁴ *Bull. d. Soc. Dantesca*, N. S., viii, p. 265.

⁵ *La Vita Nuova di D. A. con introduzione etc.*, di Giovanni Melodia, Milano, 1906, p. 5, Appendice alla nota 5.